

Inmates' Perspectives on Canada's First Prison Overdose Prevention Site (OPS)



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Lynne Leonard PhD
Associate Professor
Director, HIV and HCV
Prevention Research Team
School of Epidemiology and
Public Health

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa



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BACKGROUND

Prior to the implementation of the OPS, among all federal Institutions, Drumheller had the highest number of non-fatal and unintentional overdose events among inmates.

A unique initiative in Canada and internationally, Correctional Service Canada implemented an Overdose Prevention Service (OPS) at Alberta's Drumheller Institution June 24th 2019.

Goals of the OPS service include:

- Prevention of death related to drug-related overdose;
- Reduction in the number of non-sterile needles in circulation;
- Reduction in prevalence of injection with previously-used needles;
- Reduction in HIV and HCV transmission and acquisition;
- Reduction in occurrence of skin infections related to injection drug use; and
- Facilitating entry and engagement into drug-treatment programs including mental health services and opiate agonist treatment,



METHODOLOGY

As one component of a comprehensive evaluation to determine feasibility, acceptability and recommendations for further Pan Canadian roll out, this presentation reports on the acceptability of the service from the perspectives of the

Recruitment

- Recruitment took place November 2019.
- Posters promoting opportunity to meet with independent researcher to anonymously discuss personal opinions of the OPS displayed within the Institution and in the OPS.
- Convenience sampling enhanced by purposeful sampling implemented to obtain maximum variation in inmate experience.

Participants

Following informed consent, confidential anonymous qualitative interviews held with:

- Inmates currently accessing OPS;
- Inmates who had applied and were waiting Institution approval;
- Chairs of the Inmate Committee; and
- Inmates who wanted to express an opinion on the service.

Analysis

Thematic analysis informed by grounded theory

RESULTS INCLUDE

"It's a safe place to inject."

"It's supervised."

*"It's not in the cells,
not in the units."*

**Removing drug use from
congregate settings and
increasing safety**

*"I no longer have to trust that
someone else's needle is clean"*
*"A clean needle. I don't use a dirty rig
no more – a jail rig"*

Reduction in needle sharing

OPS used 798 times by 30 individuals July 10th 2019- 8th February 2020

RESULTS

OPS a catalyst in removing stigma around drug use and opened up discussions around responding to addiction issues

"OPS has made people aware of addiction, its normalising and we're talking about addiction."

"Now OK to admit that I have an addiction, not a secret anymore"

"It's bringing the problem of addiction to the surface."

"Addiction was previously looked negatively upon..... the problem of addiction can now be responded to."

CONCLUSION

Demonstrated HIV- and HCV-related harm reduction health benefits and movement towards addressing and responding to addiction as a health issue in a safe clinical environment augur well for the ongoing Pan-Canadian scale up of this novel